

The Christian News-Letter

No. 211

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

June 28th, 1944

DEAR MEMBER,

The 6th of June will live unforgettably in the memories of this generation. In the morning the Prime Minister's "I have to announce to the House that during the night the first of a series of landings in force upon the continent of Europe has taken place." In the evening the King's broadcast, with its call to a vigil for prayer—prayer not that God may do our will, but that we may be enabled to do the will of God.

The remark has been made that in the last war there was not so much talk about prayer as in this. What is certainly true is that broadcasting has made possible a new directness of relation between speaker and listeners. Never have the possibilities of the air been used to better purpose than by the King on this unique occasion.

"It is more important," Daniel Jenkins says in his little book about prayer,¹ "that this time of war should make us pray better than that days of national prayer should help us to win the war." It is a reminder how perverted our outlook has become that we find it so hard to believe this. But if man is essentially a person and the real world is that of personal relations the statement expresses the literal truth in regard to the future well-being of mankind. It is in and through living communion with a personal God that we can resist the demoralizing pressures of a mass society and be raised above environment and fate.

PRAYING FOR OUR ENEMIES

As the war approaches its climax and assumes more and more the form of mechanized mass slaughter on an unprecedented scale, one of the most fruitful means of preserving and expressing the reality of our personal existence is obedience to Christ's command that we should pray for our enemies. This thought is in the minds of some of our members. One of them writes:—

"There is, I believe, a good deal of evidence, both in the Forces and outside, to show that men and women feel the Church has failed at a point where a clear lead was possible. The obligation to pray for our enemies is one laid upon us by the Gospel and not by the necessities of the military situation.

"The prayers for our enemies generally used in public worship fall almost entirely under two headings—that their hearts may be turned, and that our Christian brethren in Germany may feel their

¹ *Prayer and the Service of God*. Faber and Faber, 5s.

oneness with us in their time of persecution and oppression. Both these prayers are very right and proper, but it requires no great spiritual effort to pray them, nor do they do more than *begin* to fulfil what the Gospel lays upon us in the injunction to 'love our enemies and pray for them that despitefully use us.'

"Firstly, in regard to prayer for our enemies as members of nations with which we are at war. Believing what we do about Fascism, it is right to pray that their hearts may be turned. But they are also ordinary human beings who suffer through war as we do. General prayers for all who suffer are not enough. As sinful mortals we need the discipline of prayer in specific terms for the suffering of our enemies, especially such as we cause by our action in war. (I believe that through this discipline the Christian learns to react quite spontaneously in certain situations, e.g. in a raid, to pray equally for the bomber crews under A.A. fire as for those who are being bombed; at the news of an Allied victory to pray for those who know the bitterness of defeat.)

"The second aspect is prayer as it concerns our fellow Christians in enemy countries. We have to learn to pray for our fellow Christians *knowing* that most of them are fighting against us as hard as they can in the military sense, even while some fight with us in such things as getting refugees out of the country, and they remain loyal members of the Church. This tension within the Church is totally unrecognized in public worship. Nor is there any recognition of the spiritual danger in which we place our fellow men in enemy countries by acts of war. We *must* pray that these things may not estrange them from God nor make more difficult the work of reconciliation after the war.

"Without this 'discipline' I see no hope of the Church in this country—never mind the whole nation—achieving that spirit of humility and penitence for which we have learned to pray occasionally."

Another letter is from a man in the Commandos who has been on active service. Speaking out of his individual experience and sense of need, he says: "I say with grief, when I think what the Church of England has meant to me ever since I can first remember, that for the most part we have turned to it in vain; prayers for victory, prayers for our allies, prayers for our soldiers, sailors and airmen, special prayers for Russia, whose government and leaders laugh at them; but in vain have we listened for the words: 'And now let us pray for our enemies, that through God we may be reconciled to them and they to us.'"

How, it may be asked, can we sincerely pray for the Germans when we are at the same time killing and bombing them? Is it not sheer hypocrisy? If the God to whom we pray is a God of righteousness and mercy, prayer in the sense intended by our correspondents is compatible with a resolute determination that measures should be taken to prevent Germany from again launching war upon the world, that those guilty of wanton cruelty and brutality should be punished, and that the German people as a whole, who have permitted the Nazi movement to develop, should be compelled to make the fullest possible reparation to the peoples whom they have despoiled. But we shall bungle the whole business, and only lay up stores of trouble for the future, unless in the

performance of these necessary acts we learn, however imperfectly, to look on our enemies with the just and compassionate eyes of God—to see them not as mere objects of revenge, but as persons whose restoration as loyal members of the human community must be our ultimate aim. And that difficult, but essential, lesson has to be learned through the discipline of prayer.

THE STUDY OF WORLD AFFAIRS

A pamphlet has reached us from America containing two addresses delivered at the inauguration of a new Institute of World Affairs.¹ The Institute is an offshoot of the New School for Social Research, which has on its staff scholars from nearly every country in Europe. Conditions in Europe in the years preceding the war compelled many distinguished teachers to emigrate to America, bringing about a remarkable and potentially fruitful intermingling of traditions and cultures. This varied experience is strikingly represented on the Research Council of the new Institute. It proposes to follow to a large extent the lines laid down by the Kiel Institute of World Economics and the British Royal Institute of International Affairs. It is based on the sound principle that no single department of thought can provide an adequate understanding of what is happening in the world, and that the task demands the co-operation of economists, sociologists, political scientists, philosophers and representatives of other branches of knowledge. The executive director of research is Dr. Adolph Löwe, who before he left this country for America took a keen interest in the *Christian News-Letter* and contributed one of our early Supplements.

In his address at the inauguration of the Institute Dr. Löwe begins by insisting that we cannot take it for granted, as leading schools in social thought have done for the past two hundred years, that material forces will inevitably bring about world integration. He shows that there are powerful trends working in the contrary direction. A dispassionate study of the facts makes it plain not only that has there not yet emerged "one world," but that the forces at work are so manifold and contradictory that we cannot tell what pathway will lead us to the desired goal, and need to know much more about what is really going on before we can reason with confidence and act with responsibility. This cautious attitude of the real scholar is in refreshing contrast with the light-hearted, confident, dogmatic assertions which abound in so many quarters.

From this basic fact is deduced a very important consequence. If we cannot depend on the automatic working of economic forces to bring about world-integration, the only means of achieving it is rational planning and constructive purpose. But if this is true, we are confronted by what Dr. Löwe believes to be the central problem of contemporary world politics. This is the present gulf between the objective demands of the world situation and the unpreparedness of men in general to meet them. Can we hope that the average citizens of our democracies with

¹ Copies are not available in this country, but can be ordered from America through the Oxford University Press.

their small-scale minds and parochial outlook will be willing to sacrifice sectional interests for the good of mankind as a whole? And if not, what chance is there of establishing a stable international order?

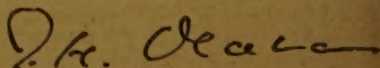
At this point Dr. Löwe recurs to the idea of spontaneous co-operation, which he brilliantly expounded in his earlier pamphlet, *The Price of Liberty*,¹ as the explanation of the remarkable cohesion of social life in Great Britain. Social control, if it is to be exercised democratically, presupposes a community of purpose. The freedom we have enjoyed in the past has been assured far more by conformity in habits and ideals than by formal checks and balances. Nations have been fused into unity by centuries of history shared in common by divergent classes and factions. But where in an international order can we look for similar traditions, creating and sustaining spontaneous cohesion strong enough to overcome the clash of sectional interests?

The fundamental truth, which was forcibly brought home to us by the failure of the League of Nations, is that no international machinery is workable which ultimately requires as its basis an international democratic society that does not yet exist. The practical consequence of this, as Dr. Löwe clearly sees, is that a democratic international society may very probably stand at the *end*, rather than at the *beginning*, of an era of world control. It may be inevitable in existing circumstances that the four Great Powers should assume a trusteeship, in spite of the danger that they may abuse it, and should impose a world order. It is true that peace will not be stable until it rests on international understanding; but it is also true that that understanding can grow only in an atmosphere of peace, even if it be an enforced peace.

The history of western nations offers an instructive parallel. Spontaneous cohesion did not mark their beginnings. Violent discords had to be hammered into unity by the absolutist State. Only after unity had been achieved by this painful process was the stage set for spontaneous co-operation and for the coming of democracy. This historical precedent also contains a warning. In every European country absolutism misused its historical rôle to favour sectional interests. The Great Powers must remember that their leadership will be accepted only so long as they prove by their actions that they are preparing the way for the abrogation of the dominant position which they may temporarily enjoy.

The Master of Balliol continues in this issue the discussion of freedom in modern society which was begun two months ago by Mr. Woodruff.

Yours sincerely,



¹ Hogarth Press, 1s. 6d.

CHRISTIANS AND A FREE SOCIETY

MY DEAR OLDHAM,

"To-day," said Mr. Douglas Woodruff, in the Supplement you published in May, "it seems to me that Christians have a particular and obvious truth to reaffirm about the whole trend of the time. They are the obvious people to be the champions of the great principle that the political authority must never be allowed to consider itself, or make itself, co-extensive with the range of human life. Society, we must continue to repeat, is a wider concept than the State." How cordially I would accept that, but as the great Captain Bunsby remarked, "The bearings of this observation lies in the application of it." Mr. Woodruff's application seems to me disastrous.

Disastrous especially in this: the defeats suffered by democracy on the continent and the triumph of totalitarianism were largely due to the assumption which Mr. Woodruff seems to support, that there is no alternative to the choice between *laissez-faire* and totalitarianism, that every attempt to use the powers of the State in new ways to ensure a minimum standard of security and liberty to the great masses of men and women in a modern industrial society is a step towards totalitarianism and must be resisted. If that assumption becomes prevalent in this country we are doomed. For men are not going any longer to accept the evils of mass unemployment, nor the continuance of the frightful but remediable evils from which we have been suffering. They are going to insist that we fight Sir William Beveridge's giants. These cannot be fought without an extension of the powers of the State. If Mr. Woodruff tells men that that means totalitarianism they will, however reluctantly, accept totalitarianism, and Mr. Woodruff, with Professor Hayek and their supporters, will have helped to bring about a result they rightly deplore.

But how false this assumption is and how inexcusable of an Englishman to make or support it. For the theory and practice of this country have for a long time been quite distinct from either *laissez-faire* or totalitarianism. The area of State intervention has steadily increased ever since the early factory acts of the nineteenth century. But the *principle* of State interference has always been the same, that the criterion of State interference is that it should promote liberty. As circumstances change the State has to interfere in different ways for this purpose and with this result. The enormous change which has come over the action of the State in the last hundred years is due to the application of the same principle to the profoundly changed circumstances of society.

As the result of all this development of State activity, we do not less cherish the independence of Churches and voluntary organizations: on the contrary. In the early part of last century Erastianism, the

assumption that the Church was an organ of the State, and the individualism which Mr. Woodruff appears to advocate, flourished side by side. Erastianism is nothing like so strong as it used to be, and Mr. Woodruff's picture of himself as fighting for an unpopular and endangered cause strikes me as slightly ridiculous. I do not deny that there are people in this country who, either from the Right or the Left, preach the totalitarianism—fascist or socialist—which he fears. Those on the Left are the ones I know best. I admit their existence and deplore their errors; but they bow to Baal with much more uncertain knees than they used to, and I have little fear of their not being converted to a better way of thinking, if Mr. Woodruff and his friends will give us a chance.

Mr. Woodruff says, "Christians to-day strike me as particularly prone to the failing of the willing of the end of a free society, and not being prepared to will the means," and he enumerates the means—"limited institutions, limited political action, personal enjoyment of and responsibility over property, and the acceptance of the fact that there will be abuses wherever there is freedom." I might accept those items, but only if I might add another (and the addition is vital), "the maintenance for all of such a minimum standard of life as is necessary to make membership of a free society a reality." Without that you may easily have a society where freedom is enjoyed by a few at the expense of freedom being denied to the vast majority. I find it difficult to believe that any Christian can possibly acquiesce in that, but Mr. Woodruff's language almost suggests that he does.

Consider the extraordinary remarks he makes about the desire for security and the strange assumption that it is a sign of a loss or an undervaluing of liberty. Professional men like Mr. Woodruff and myself lead a life of almost complete security, security of income and security of employment. He obviously, though secure, loves liberty. He says elsewhere in the Supplement that Churches ought to be endowed in order that religious leaders should be independent. Security seemingly helps them to love liberty. So that Mr. Woodruff's theory of the relation of security and liberty would seem to be that the enjoyment of security and the love of liberty are entirely compatible, but that if you do not have security and ask for it, you prove that you undervalue liberty. What nonsense!

I am reminded of an Oxford Don who, joining in a newspaper correspondence, reproved the working men for their desire for security. He, like myself, had complete security of income and security of employment. When working men want the small measure of security offered by the Beveridge proposals they show, according to these superior middle-class persons, that they undervalue liberty. Consider this elementary fact. Industry in this country is run, or was run till the war, by means of the sanction of the sack, somewhat tempered by Trade Union action. The great majority of working men in peace time are liable to be sacked, and reduced to the horrors of unemployment, with little or no notice and often in the most arbitrary way. That is

what insecurity means for them, being at the mercy of the arbitrary action of others. Let Mr. Woodruff read *Men Without Work*, and think how he would feel if he were liable to be reduced to the condition of such men without redress or appeal. When he and that Oxford tutor and other complacent and secure middle-class persons talk in superior condemnation of the working man's desire for security, it seems to me nothing but effrontery. It is surely the first of Christian duties for us all to have some sympathetic understanding of the lives and needs of other members of society. If middle-class professional people once grasped what it is like to be at the mercy of an industrial system where power and responsibility for the use of power are divorced, they could not write as they do. If Mr. Woodruff is taking a high line about society, should he not be prepared that something should be done to help society to be in some sense social?

Mr. Woodruff rebukes us for talking of Christian liberty and Christian equality. Liberty and equality are, according to him, secular ideals and he does not apparently allow a specifically Christian ideal of liberty or of equality. St. Paul talks of "the glorious liberty of the children of God," and says that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Doesn't that, and much more in the New Testament, imply that there is a distinctive Christian principle of liberty and equality? They are not, in spite of Mr. Woodruff, the least incompatible. For Christian equality admits of differences so long as they are compatible with fellowship, and liberty so long as it is liberty in a fellowship. It was such a conception of Christian liberty and equality in their specific Puritan rendering which underlay the beginnings of democracy in this country and in America, and all through the history of modern democracy there has been a contention between the Christian principle of liberty and equality and their abstract counterparts which came from the French Revolution. The *abstract* principles are incompatible.

The Russians, believing with Mr. Woodruff that liberty and equality are incompatible, chose equality and gave up liberty. Mr. Woodruff chooses liberty and gives up equality. I cannot see why there is any Christian reason for choosing one or other of these unnecessary alternatives. It is certainly puzzling to understand why the Church ought to advocate a principle of individualistic liberty which comes to us from Thomas Hobbes through the eighteenth century French philosophers and Bentham. Nor do I see that a view, because it is "the longer view," is necessarily the right one. The Pharisees who objected to the healing of a man on the Sabbath were obviously taking the longer view, but were not therefore right.

My main quarrel with Mr. Woodruff is that though he talks a great deal about society, he does not seem to me really to believe in it. He says that society is a wider concept than the State. I agree, and I hope and believe—rather against appearances—that he also thinks it a profounder and more important concept. But it cannot possibly be that

in men's minds unless social ties and obligations are a reality. Why is Mr. Woodruff so suspicious of our talking of the community? He rightly objects to our equating it with the State, but he is so obsessed with this that he does not want us to talk of it at all. We are not, e.g. to talk of the community's income. Why not? We are no doubt a very imperfect community, but we are one to some extent; we acknowledge, if haltingly, that we are members one of another. We most of us, rich as well as poor, approve of that redistribution of income which we have now for long practised in taxation for the social services. The State is an organ or instrument of the community, and it would be an evil day if the organ swallowed up the community. That is Mr. Woodruff's concern and it ought to be the concern of us all. But it would be a more evil day if the effects of evils like continued mass unemployment disintegrated the community altogether. Let anyone read such a document as the Carnegie Report on *The Young Adult in South Wales* and ask himself what kind of reality society will have if that sort of thing is allowed to go on.

I have said elsewhere that the purpose of the State is to serve the community and make it more truly a community. The community can only use the State for that purpose if it is already in some real sense a community. It cannot be truly that without Churches and families and all the network of voluntary societies. There I agree with Mr. Woodruff. But there are in our modern civilization some disintegrating forces so powerful that unless they are fought the social fabric will go to pieces, and they cannot be successfully fought without the aid of the State. All Sir William Beveridge's demons disintegrate society. All can be slain or rendered fairly harmless, with the help of the State and not without it. If the plans now being considered secure to all a minimum of economic and industrial security, then the other healing forces of society will have a chance to operate. But if Mr. Woodruff were successful in persuading this country to resist these schemes, and the kind of disillusion and cynicism and complete social disintegration which the Carnegie Report on the young unemployed describes should become general, then, the ordinary social texture of life being largely destroyed, we should learn that desperate diseases call for desperate remedies and Mr. Woodruff, having insisted that the disease be allowed to become desperate, would be responsible for the desperation of the remedy.

Yours very sincerely,

A. D. LINDSAY

Subscriptions—12s. 6d. (\$3.00 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year. 6s. 6d. for six months Great Britain and Ireland only). Single copies 6d. (to No. 178, 4d.); reduction for quantities.

Indices—Vols. I-VIII (Oct. 1939-Dec. 1943), 1s. each post free.

Groups—Special rates for Group subscriptions can be had on application.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 19 DEAN'S YARD, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, S.W. 1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Christian Frontier Council, and printed in Great Britain by the Church Army Press, Cowley, Oxford.